INFLUENTIAL POWER OF SYNERGY OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND EUROPEAN STUDIES ON EUROPEANIZATION AND DEMOCRATIZATION

PUTEREA INFLUENTĂ DE SINERGIE A DREPTURILOR OMULUI EUROPENE ASUPRA EUROPEANIZĂRII ȘI DEMOCRATIZĂRII

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Abstract. *The content and process (both the essence and form) of Democratization and Europeanization are critical for the transformation and reform of the state and nation aiming to bolster sovereignty while ensuring a balance between regulated freedom, the rule of law, the fight against corruption, the accountability and transparency of public structures, and stable institutions. This focus aligns also with the political dimensions of the EU's Copenhagen criteria, as emphasized in the EU-Georgia Association Agreement and the progress evaluation documents of Georgia within the EU Enlargement Pack 2023 and 2024.*

Democratization is the policy for protecting human rights, traditionally included in Human Rights Studies. However, comprehending human rights in the post-Soviet context poses significant challenges, particularly in societies with restricted access to information or with broad aggressive disinformation. The innate freedoms that individuals are born with often remain unrecognized in such environments. Thus, it is pivotal and crucial to incorporate Human Rights Studies in all levels of education (schools, vocational level, HEIs).

However, only theoretical teaching of Human Rights could not be effective if there is no cognitive and practical approach in the sense that Human Rights currently come from the European Union and learning of Human Rights should bring Georgia to the EU. Otherwise, Human Rights can be learned in Russian Federation as well. Thus, It is essential to combine and fix Human Rights Studies with European Studies.

The necessity of mixing Human Rights and European Studies not only in practice but in strategic documents, laws and education-quality regulating standards and making this approach mandatory should become the policy issues of the Education of Georgia.

The article uses descriptive, explanatory (interpretive), practice review and case-study methods.

Keywords: *Georgia, European Studies, Human Rights, Education.*

INTRODUCTION

As articulated, "There can be no democracy without committed democrats." [1]. For democracy to thrive, citizens and public institutions must possess a thorough understanding of human rights and their appropriate implementation. The challenge of grasping human rights and freedoms is particularly pronounced in the post-Soviet space, where societies often live under restrictive regimes and limited information access or vice versa under excessive information that brings the false. In such contexts, even fundamental freedoms - those inherent to human nature and independent of state intervention (which naturally exists even without law and state by birth) - can be obscured. Consequently, establishing a democratic society necessitates a foundational education in human rights. Effective policy implementation hinges on:

1. Public Awareness: citizens must understand and exercise their rights and participate in decision-making processes.
2. Institutional Comprehension: political and public structures need to legislate and execute policies with a firm grasp of human rights principles.
3. Civil Sector Engagement: NGOs and civil organizations must play a role in evaluating and monitoring human rights practices.
4. Media: media must accurately inform the public about human rights issues.

In this context (In the above-mentioned quadrangle - people, state, civil sector, media), the educational process, particularly in post-Soviet nations like Georgia, must be ongoing and progressive.

But reality and practice show that the traditional teaching of human rights can remain only in the space of theoretical knowledge and not show the result that should bring the country and society to Europe. If it is not understood in the teaching of human rights that today the space of standards of these rights comes from the European Union and their teaching should lead us to the European Union, what is the purpose of teaching only for the sake of teaching?

However, traditional human rights education often remains purely theoretical without driving practical, transformative outcomes. The key point is that human rights teaching should align with and actively contribute to the country's integration into the European Union. The argument emphasizes that human rights education needs to be grounded in the standards set by the EU, demonstrating that the purpose of such teaching is not merely to impart knowledge but to foster a real commitment to European integration. Without this focus, human rights education risks becoming an exercise in theory with no tangible impact on the country's progress toward EU membership.

Democratization now means Europeanisation in Georgia. That is why their synergy in teaching is very important. Teaching human rights without European Studies looks vulnerable and useless today.

European Studies, should be supported strongly and sounded. If incorporating European Studies into the educational framework, it will significantly enhance human

rights education itself. The cognitive process should become the subject of regulation within the education policy via strategic papers, laws and quality regulating standards.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study focuses on the Georgian context. It discusses the style of Georgian education policy. In this part, the paper employs a descriptive, interpretive method to outline the current state of European Studies and human rights education in Georgia.

The paper additionally uses case-study and practice review methods to address challenges and proposes recommendations for future development.

The analysis highlights the potential benefits of a synergistic relationship between European Studies and human rights education. The paper tables the questions about the integration of European and human rights studies in all levels of education and different disciplines and explores the connection between these fields.

The study draws on a variety of materials, including legal documents (national and international), policy documents, reliable internet sources, and academic articles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) emphasizes the role of education in promoting and protecting human rights. *“Every individual and every organ of society, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance”.* [2, p.2]. This is an uncontroversial approach and confirms the influential positive power of education in the field of human rights protection.

Since regaining independence in 1991, Georgia has increasingly incorporated human rights education into teaching programs mostly at the higher education. Education itself is a field of human rights. [3]. So, the legal framework in Georgia protects education as a human right since the adoption of the constitution of Georgia.

As Georgia has been conducting European Integration process over 28 year, as Georgia was granted candidacy status of the EU membership [4, p.5] and as the constitution of Georgia stipulates the Euro-Atlantic integration as a choice of the nation [5], the education practices, naturally, involve and consist of popularizing the EU studies. The country has sought to align its educational practices with European standards. Despite these efforts and recognitions, Georgian main laws, including those governing higher education, general education and vocational education, are lacking with specific provisions for European Studies and human rights education. Only the Strategic document on Education and Science highlights the importance of EU integration but does not directly address the development of European or human rights studies in depth. [6]. The only official/legal document introducing binding clauses about the teaching of European and

Human Rights Studies, is the law programs' standards adopted by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement. However, in contrast to the normative/legal acts of Georgia, which cannot ensure the proper regulation about the main values of Democracy and Europeanization within the education policy aiming to achieve the constitutional goals, the practice is stronger and more pronounced in this part. Georgian higher education institutions (HEIs) offer specialized programs of European Studies and human rights (BA, MA and Doctoral levels). But these programs are predominantly available only at the tertiary level, while general school education and vocational education remains fragmented and lacks comprehensive coverage of European Studies and Human Rights. [7].

European Studies programs in Georgia typically cover various aspects of the EU, including its economy, politics, institutions, citizentiop, internal market etc. These courses are binding as directly relate to goals and objectives of special European studies programs. But out of these programs, EU studies are binding only in MA law programs (for examples: "EU, Association Agreement and Legal Approximation" at the Gori State University [8], "Association Agreement, Law-Making and Legal Approximation" at the Caucasus University [9]). Other higher educational programs remain without compulsory teaching on EU studies. [10], limiting students' exposure to European standards and practices.

European studies is inseparable from the teaching about values related to human rights and freedoms. Each discipline or program of European studies is based on an understanding of how the EU functions; each policy/direction of the EU is a constituent part of human well-being, freedom, equality, justice. It is certainly technically possible to teach human rights separately from EU studies, for example, by teaching the national constitution, national labor law, national consumer rights law etc. But if EU comparative studies are integrated into these disciplines, outcomes in the field of human rights education would be more effective and sustainable. Such an approach is rare in Georgia.

The teaching of human rights in the context of European studies (sectoral-based or general-based) is important to the extent that not only the law and theory of human protection, but also practice of democratic states are better known. This gives a possibility to compare the current situation of Georgia with the European and to generate the motivation on development vector – towards the Europe. This is the possible path to strengthen human rights education and achieve the goals of European integration as well. Merely teaching human rights without cognition process and skills for Europeanization will resemble knowledge for knowledge's sake and not knowledge for development.

Human rights education is crucial for empowering citizens to protect and exercise their rights. It is essential for journalists, civil society representatives, public officials and for everyone to understand human rights to ensure effective policy-making, monitoring, reporting, and implementation of value-based processes. But all educated peoples (all

“democrats”) should realize why thy learn. Because to bring the state and nation towards civilized world – European family. So, integrating synergic studies across all education levels and disciplines is imperatively essential for advancing democratic values and European practices. The best way is to start learning from school-time (childhood) and deepen the awareness furthermore.

Georgia currently ranks 51st in the Human Rights Protection Index among 142 countries. [11]. This figure reflects and confirms that the human rights protection policy is not fully, completely and well understood in Georgia, both in the government and private sectors. This index proves that people of Georgia still are under injustice, harms and discrimination. Fundamentals that goes to Human Rights, Europeanisation processes, rule of law, security, freedom of expression, anti-corruption - are basis for those decisions that were taken by the European Union suspending the process of the negotiations on Georgia’s accession. [12, p.10]. Ranking underscores also proves that education needs to be improved in Georgia.

Knowledge of human rights and the EU is essential for revealing the human rights violations, for the real understanding of the security and peace [13], for the harmonious development of the society, where every person is respected and no aggression and polarization is emerging (which is a big problem in Georgia today). Teaching and education can prevent or resolve such negatives.

Promoting human rights and democracy is a key priority of EU external action [14]. Thus when the EU supports Georgia in the field of education, it directly aims to reach the good understanding of the European nature, common space and values of justice, freedom, equality. Georgia should share and align with these values in a developing manner starting via modification of education policy and teaching methods.

CONCLUSIONS

Georgia remains a hybrid democracy, with ongoing challenges in protecting human rights, freedoms and Europeanisation. Comprehensive and continuous education process by synergy of Human Rights and European Studies beginning from childhood and extending throughout all educational levels, is crucial for the strengthening the democratization and Europeanization. This approach should be written directly in Georgian laws and education quality ensuring documents. Incorporating of new methods (obligatory comparative studies) in different disciplines or introducing one binding teaching course in all programs can significantly contribute to the fostering of robust and effective practices in Georgia.

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